



Burns

First Prize Poem

by



Alex. Mc Nab

READ BY Alexander Mc Nab, Esq.

AT THE BURNS ANNIVERSARY 1885

IN THE HORTICULTURAL GARDENS.

FOR WHICH THE POET RECEIVED A GOLD MEDAL,

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# BURNS

Hail tae the bard ! wha did belang  
Tae nae mere class or clan ;  
But did maintain and not in vain  
The Britherhood o' Man :  
The King o' Herts ! wha did far mair  
Tae knit us tae ilk ither,  
Than oor lang line (some ca't divine)  
O' Kings a' put thegither.

An' what although he may be puir,  
On Richt he takes his stand,  
An' bears him wi' the very air  
O' oor ain mountain land ;  
His mission is wi' wrang tae cope,  
An' bid it tae depart ;  
Anew tae kindle love an' hope  
In the despairing heart.

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Frae what plain common sense c'as richt  
 Nae sophistry can win him,  
 And daurs tae speak wi' a' his micht  
 The burning thochts within him ;  
 His sense o' richt, his sense o' wrang,  
 His love o' humble worth ;  
 He poured in an immortal sang,  
 That's ringing roun' the earth :

For intellectually sublime,  
 This humble peasant saw, that  
 Despite distinctions here, in time,  
 "A man's a man for a' that ;"  
 And if there was a man on earth  
 Wha had his detestation,  
 'Twas he wha measured men by birth  
 An' worshipped rank an' station :

For after honours he wad sneak,  
 An' he'd defend the wrang,  
 An' he wad trample on the weak,  
 An' truckle tae the strang ;  
 Stick ribbons in his button hole,  
 An' gartens at his knee,  
 An' his bit trifle o' a' sowl  
 Gang perfectly a-gley.

But still despite o' a' the wrang  
That comes by human blindness,  
The spirit o' the peasant's sang  
Is pity, love, an' kindness :  
He pities e'en the warst o' folk,  
For even some o' them  
Wi' a' their flaws, he fin's mair cause,  
Tae pity than condemn :

An' for the outcast everywhere,  
He had a hert tae feel,  
An' had some sympathy tae spare,  
E'en for the very Deil.  
Tho' in the grasp o' poverty  
Wi' a' its wants an' fears,  
His hert o'erflows for ither's woes  
As 'twere a fount o' tears.

E'en when he sees a needless pang  
Gien tae the brute creation,  
He wha inflict'st, maun bide the stang,  
O' his roused indignation ;  
The thochtless youth cannot escape  
Wha wounds the harmless " Hare,"  
For mercy in the peasant's shape,  
Stands forth protesting there.

His sangs hae something in their soun'  
 That fills the hert an' e'e ;  
 "Ye banks an' braes o' bonnie Doon,"  
 Are magic words tae me.  
 O Doon ! thou'st like nae ither stream,  
 Love's sacred spell has bound thee,  
 For a' the glory o' a dream,  
 The peasant threw around thee :

Thou sped'st unknown through ages lang,  
 A little nameless river ;  
 Till pity poured love's tears in sang,  
 An' hallowed thee for ever ;  
 Lang as the human hert remains,  
 A fount o' hopes an' fears,  
 This simple little strain o' strains  
 Shall stir it into tears :

For by the Poet's magic art,  
 Tho' but a moorland river,  
 Through the green regions o' the heart,  
 It shall roll on for ever ;  
 Wi' him the birds forever sing ;  
 The gowans ne'er depart ;  
 He carries a supernal spring  
 Forever in his heart :



The "modest flower" he crushed to earth  
Wi' a' its snawy blossoms,  
By him transplanted, blooms henceforth  
For ever in oor bosoms.  
An' a' the streams may cease to flow;  
The sun itsel may vary;  
But down the ages he shall go,  
Wi' his dear Highland Mary.

Anon the bard doth change his mood,  
And in the mirthfu' vein,  
What fancies flit on mother-wit,  
An' humour a' his ain :  
Until his mirth provoking strains,  
Set daddie care a daffin',  
An pit sic fun in his auld veins  
He canna flyte for laughin' :

Despite the thunder's dreedfu' soun,  
A' through the air sae mirk,  
Mang deils an' witches he's set down  
In Alloway's auld kirk ;  
He hears auld Nick play up a spring,  
Amang his crew uncanny :  
Sees a' the deevils dance an' fling,  
An' cross an' cleek wi' Nannie.

L.P.S. over 100 R.

Hears Tammie, as his senses swim,  
Roar "Weel dune Cutty Sark,"  
An' hears the hellish legion grim  
Rush on him in the dark,  
An' lang across the brig o' time,  
That legion weird an' scraggy,  
Shall chase triumphant Tam sublime  
On his immortal Maggie!

An' lo! aneath the cloud o' nicht,  
Despite misfortune's deggers,  
Saw mortal ever sic a sicht?  
As a' they "Jolly beggars."  
E'en happiness that shuns the great  
Can nestle amang rags,  
And even love an' joy can wait  
Amang auld mealy bags.

E'en wisdom, gravely listens when  
His "Twa Dugs" tak a seat;  
Tae get some licht on ways o' men,  
But even dugs are beat.  
Burns wasna perfect tae a dot,  
An' wha amang us a'  
But has some hole in his ain coat,  
An' maybe some hae twa.



Let them tak tent wha think they staun,  
God keep us humble a'!  
The pride o' never having fa'en,  
Itsel's a dreedfu' fa.'  
O never, never! forward be,  
The erring ane tae blame,  
For under like temptation ye  
Micht just hae dune the same.

Burns micht hae muckle tae repent,  
Frae "passions wild and strong";  
But did he gie his soul's consent,  
Although he did the wrong?  
We love him even wi' a stain,  
Nae matter wha may ban;  
We love him, for he did maintain,  
The liberty of Man.

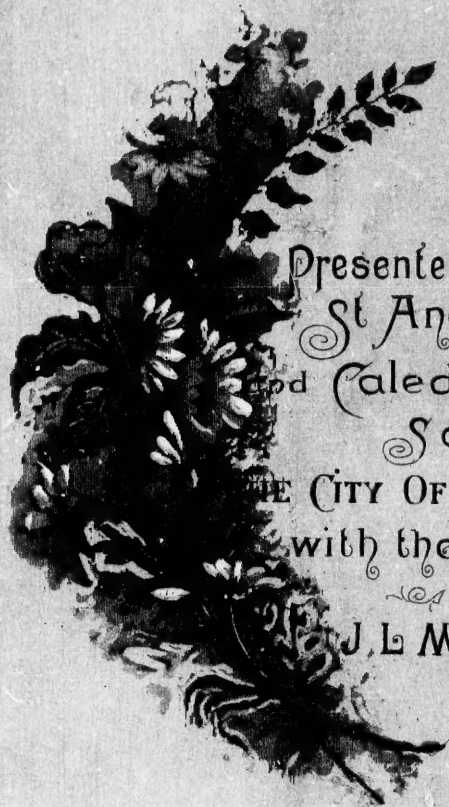
And till the ages a' are fled,  
And time shall cease to roll,  
His "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,"  
Shall fire the freeman's soul.  
Hail! Minstrel o' the brave and true,  
Tho' Scotia's pride thou art,  
In spirit thou belongest to  
The universal heart.

ALEXANDER McLACHLAN. )

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